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C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 010111

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TAGS: PGOV MARR KDEM ID
SUBJECT: A WIN FOR YUDHOYONO IN PARLIAMENT: ARMED FORCES
COMMANDER HEARING DELAYED

REF: A. JAKARTA 9799 (SUTARTO REMAINS IN COMMAND)
 1B. JAKARTA 9750 (YUDHOYONO MEET AMBASSADOR)
 1C. JAKARTA 9664 (PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS ELECTED)

Classified By: Political Officer David R. Greenberg, reason: 1.4 (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) The House of Representatives (DPR) on October 15 voted to slow-track President Megawati's appointment of Ryamizard Ryacudu as Armed Forces (TNI) Commander. This decision marks a victory for President-elect Yudhoyono, who recently told the Ambassador he did not appreciate Megawati's nominating Ryamizard in her final days in office (ref B). However, the coalition of parties supporting Yudhoyono in parliament remains fragile and could disintegrate if party leaders disagree with Yudhoyono's cabinet choices. Yudhoyono likely will revoke the presidential letter to the DPR that sought to elevate Ryamizard, instead retaining Endriartono Sutarto as TNI Commander. End Summary.

MAJORITY RESISTS PRO-MEGAWATI COALITION

12. (U) Members of the DPR decided in an October 15 plenary session to defer action on President Megawati's letter requesting DPR approval of Army Chief of Staff Ryamizard Ryacudu's appointment as Commander of the Armed Forces (TNI) (ref A). The debate over how to react to Megawati's letter reflected a division along partisan lines. "National Coalition" parties that had backed President Megawati's reelection effort (minus the United Development Party -- PPP -- which recently broke off) argued that the DPR should establish a Special Committee (PANSUS) to hold hearings over the weekend and pave the way for a change of command prior to President-elect Yudhoyono's inauguration. The parties outside of the National Coalition -- a loose grouping often dubbed the "People's Coalition," currently aligned with Yudhoyono -- argued that hearings could wait until the DPR had established its commissions for the 2004-2009 period.

13. (U) After a break for closed-door consultations, Megawati's Indonesian Democratic Party - Struggle (PDI-P) and its allies gave in to the majority position. (Note: The National Coalition now consists of Golkar, PDI-P, the Prosperous Peace Party (PDS), and the Reform Star Party (PBR) -- representing a combined total of 264 of the DPR's 550 seats. End Note.) Presumably, once inaugurated, Yudhoyono will send a new letter to the DPR, keeping TNI Commander Endriartono Sutarto in place and rendering this issue moot.

14. (C) In the legislative battle over Sutarto's resignation and Ryamizard's appointment, Yudhoyono and his allies overcame opposition from a coalition that includes the two largest political parties. However, the same pro-Yudhoyono constellation failed during the vote for DPR leadership positions (ref C), at least partly because of a split in the

National Awakening Party. On that occasion, parties' core interests were at stake, and the National Coalition devoted substantial resources to install its leadership slate. By contrast, sparse attendance on October 15 -- barely more than half the DPR's legislators showed up for the plenary session -- indicated that few parliamentarians felt a personal stake in the outcome of the TNI debate.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) Despite its initial victory in the TNI leadership controversy, the People's Coalition represents a collection of odd bedfellows that could easily disintegrate. By October 17, officials from two Islamist parties, the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) and the Crescent Moon and Star Party (PBB), threatened publicly to reevaluate their support for the President-elect, depending on the choices he makes for his cabinet.

¶6. (C) Efforts to elevate Ryamizard in the final days of Megawati's administration seemed driven by a degree of petty vindictiveness on the President's part. Megawati appears to have decided against explicitly conceding her election defeat, meeting with Yudhoyono prior to her leaving office, or attending his inauguration.

BOYCE